

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1516

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery
for veterans in southeastern Pennsylvania.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 31, 2003

Mr. GERLACH (for himself and Mr. HOFFEL) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a
national cemetery for veterans in southeastern Pennsylvania.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 The Congress finds the following:

5 (1) The metropolitan Philadelphia area is home
6 to over 340,000 veterans and their families.

7 (2) The Philadelphia National Cemetery is
8 closed to all but cremated remains.

9 (3) The Indiantown Gap National Cemetery in
10 Lebanon County, Pennsylvania is the only prac-

1 ticable inground burial alternative for many veterans
2 and their families.

3 (4) The trip to the Indiantown Gap National
4 Cemetery can be very difficult for many widows,
5 widowers, and other family members from the Phila-
6 delphia area who wish to visit the graves of their
7 loved ones.

8 (5) Almost 290,000 veterans in the Philadel-
9 phia area live at least 65 miles away from the
10 Indiantown Gap National Cemetery.

11 (6) It is in the national interest to establish a
12 new national cemetery in southeast Pennsylvania.

13 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than four years after
15 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
16 Veterans Affairs shall establish, in accordance with chap-
17 ter 24 of title 38, United States Code, a national cemetery
18 in southeastern Pennsylvania to serve the needs of vet-
19 erans and their families.

20 (b) CONSULTATION IN SELECTION OF SITE.—Before
21 selecting the site for the national cemetery established
22 under subsection (a), the Secretary shall consult with—

23 (1) appropriate officials of the State of Penn-
24 sylvania and local officials of southeastern Pennsyl-
25 vania,

1 (2) appropriate officials of the United States,
2 including the Administrator of General Services,
3 with respect to land belonging to the United States
4 in that area, including land at the Valley Forge Na-
5 tional Historic Park, that would be suitable for the
6 purpose of establishing the national cemetery under
7 subsection (a); and

8 (3) representatives of veterans service organiza-
9 tions.

10 The Governor of the State of Pennsylvania may establish
11 a blue-ribbon panel consisting of officials of the State and
12 local governments and representatives of veterans service
13 organizations in southeastern Pennsylvania to make a rec-
14 ommendation to the Secretary in the selection of the site.
15 If such a panel is established, not later than 1 year after
16 the date of the enactment of this Act, the chair of the
17 panel shall submit to the Secretary a final recommenda-
18 tion for the site of the national cemetery and an estimate
19 of the acquisition costs, if any, of the site.

20 (c) REPORT.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), not later
21 than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act,
22 the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the
23 establishment of the national cemetery under subsection
24 (a). The report shall set forth a schedule for such estab-

1 lishment and an estimate of the costs associated with such
 2 establishment.

3 (2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), if the Governor
 4 of the State of Pennsylvania submits notice to the Sec-
 5 retary of Veterans Affairs of the establishment of the blue-
 6 ribbon panel under subsection (b) within 60 days of the
 7 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall sub-
 8 mit the report required under paragraph (1) not later than
 9 6 months after the date of receipt of the final rec-
 10 ommendation of the panel.

11 (d) DEFINITION OF SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYL-
 12 VANIA.—In this section, the term “southeastern Pennsylv-
 13 ania” means—

14 (1) the city of Philadelphia; and

15 (2) the following counties in the State of Penn-
 16 sylvania:

17 (A) Berks.

18 (B) Bucks.

19 (C) Chester.

20 (D) Delaware.

21 (E) Philadelphia.

22 (F) Montgomery.

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